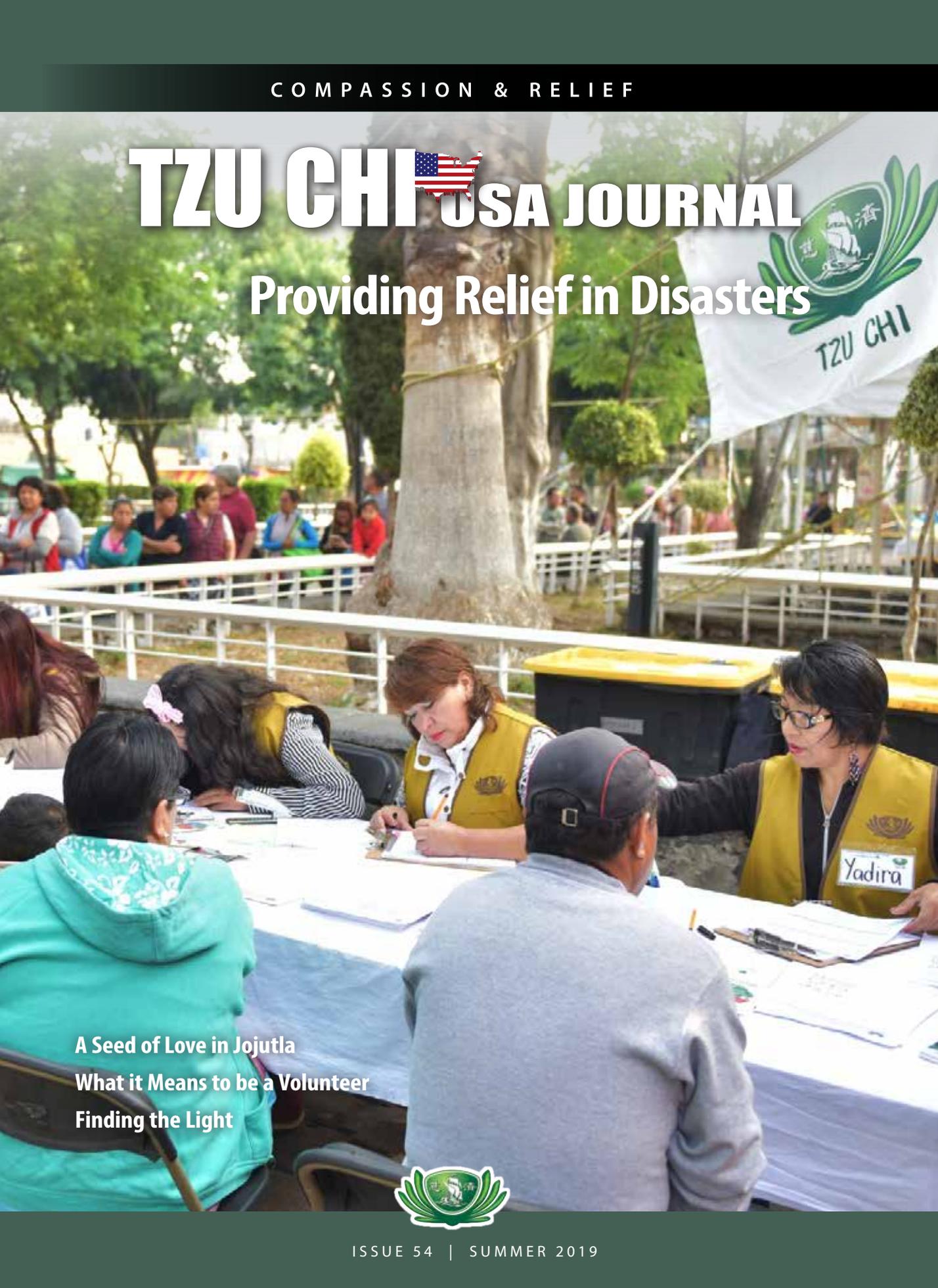


COMPASSION & RELIEF

# TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

## Providing Relief in Disasters



A Seed of Love in Jojutla  
What it Means to be a Volunteer  
Finding the Light



ISSUE 54 | SUMMER 2019



## CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

Thoughts for meditation, contemplation, and reflection

*Dharma Master Cheng Yen*  
Founder of Tzu Chi Foundation

### Cultivating Good Habits

Habits are hard to change,  
but we cannot neglect to change them  
just because it is difficult.

For every good thought we have,  
we will have one less bad thought.

If we can change our bad habits,  
then we will surely be able  
to cultivate good habits.

Catastrophe lurks in unexpected places.  
All negative karma arises  
from a single moment of carelessness.

Therefore, we must pay close attention  
to our thoughts at all times.

With the right thoughts,  
we will proceed in the right direction.

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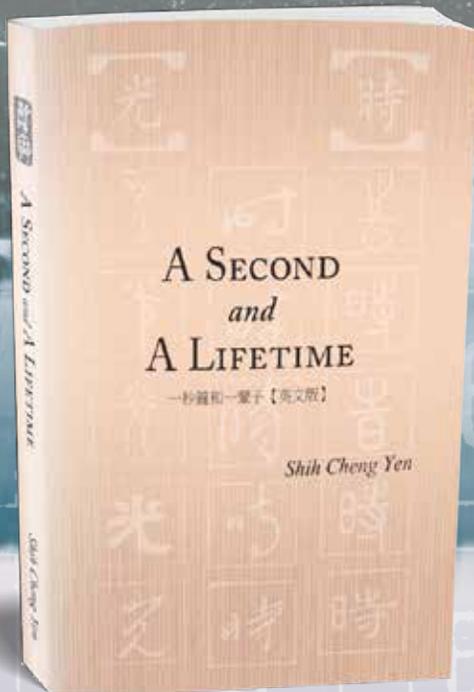


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# A SECOND *and* A LIFETIME

一秒鐘和一輩子【英文版】



This book is a collection of stories told by Master Cheng Yen. Through reading these stories on situations that people encounter in daily life, we are able to see how we can polish the precious mirror of our mind and thus return to our pure, intrinsic nature.





*Volunteers at the Jojutla Medical Outreach  
(Photo: Jaime Puerta)*

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In Chinese, “Tzu” means “compassion,” and “Chi” means “relief.” Tzu Chi volunteers demonstrate the spirit of Tzu Chi by seeking to relieve people of suffering with compassion and loving-kindness.

In the Buddhist tradition, to relieve suffering with compassion is the mission of Bodhisattvas. Traditionally, Bodhisattvas are seen as beings of great spiritual power, but Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi foundation, has always emphasized that Bodhisattvas are simply those who seek to benefit others while striving to develop themselves. In her view, Bodhisattvas are real people, in the real world, working to help others.

The Lotus Sutra mentions Bodhisattvas who emerge from the ground to take up the mission to spread the Buddha’s teachings of compassion in the world and guide people in times of hardship and struggle. Indeed, with disasters occurring all over the world, we can see Bodhisattvas emerging everywhere to help others. Take, for instance, the local volunteers in Mexico, who gathered together after the 2016 Mexican earthquake to assist in medical distributions in Jojutla, or the Catholic sisters in Ecuador, who joined hands with Tzu Chi volunteers to rebuild their community of Canoa after the 2016 Ecuador Earthquake. And in the United States, when the 2018 Camp Fire struck California’s town of Paradise, volunteers of all ages and backgrounds came together to comfort people who lost their homes, family members, and possessions. In this issue of Tzu Chi USA Journal, you will read their stories.

With natural disasters occurring so frequently, and on such a large scale, the world may seem like a dark and dangerous place. However, every day, in every moment, Bodhisattvas all over the world are working together with compassion and love. If each person can cultivate the love in their own heart and help others around them, we will be able to bring light to the world. 🌱

*Devin Makizuru*  
Editor-in-Chief



# Jing Si Instant Rice

A Quick, Healthy, and Delicious Meal

Jing Si Instant Rice was originally developed for disaster relief efforts to provide a quick and nutritious rice meal. This vegan instant rice is made from all-natural ingredients. With some creativity, Jing Si Instant Rice can be easily transformed into a variety of delicious dishes within minutes. Saving time and energy, this instant rice is truly a convenient cooking alternative in our busy lives.



**An instant meal: simply add water, hot or cold**



1 Pour 120 cc of hot or cold water into a bowl.



2 Add contents of the seasoning packet and stir.



3 Add contents of the rice pack, stir, and mix well.



4 Cover the bowl and wait for 20 minutes.

Transform Jing Si Instant Rice into many delicious dishes without cooking.



Sushi



Spring Rolls

Ochazuke  
(rice with tea)



"Once we have reduced our desires, there will be nothing worth worrying about."

- Dharma Master Cheng Yen

I still remember this past November, when I was serving at the Disaster Relief Center in Chico during California's Camp Fire. As I spoke with survivors and evacuees, they all shared about how quickly the fire approached them and how hot it was. One gentleman told me how he saw the fire burning over a ridge, and in the time it took him to grab a cup of water and return to where he had been standing a moment before, the fire had already reached his backyard. The fire burned so hot that car tires melted into the pavement, and people could feel the heat inside their cars as they tried to escape. These types of disasters are on an entirely different level from what I have heard of before, and it makes me think about why we are suddenly facing such extreme conditions now.

This past year, Tzu Chi has provided relief for wildfires, earthquakes, and many other natural disasters all over the world. Yet, these efforts are not enough. If we do not sit down and think about why such disasters are taking place, it will be difficult to respond to them no matter how much we prepare.

To me, the disasters and conditions we see are directly connected to global warming, and global warming is directly connected to the

ways in which we live our lives. Thus, if we can change our lifestyles, it is possible for us to reduce the disasters and extreme conditions we see in the world. Changing our lifestyles is not only something we should do; we need to change, and soon.

There is a Jing Si Aphorism that goes, "Seize every opportunity to do good, and we will lead a life with no regrets." If we can work together to make a change now, we will have no regrets in the future. So, this year, Tzu Chi will continue to raise awareness on issues such as global warming. We will continue to encourage plant-based diets, and we will continue our efforts to inspire people all over the world to take action to protect and cherish the earth. Undoubtedly, some changes may be very difficult to make, but it is crucial to seize every opportunity while we still have time. I hope that each person will work hard and make choices that will allow us all to live safely and peacefully in a world free of disasters. 🌱

*Hau Huang*

# Quickening Our Pace on the Bodhisattva-Path to Grow our Wisdom-life

*Everyone wishes to live in peace every day. How can we achieve this in the world? The only way is to create blessings by protecting the forests and rivers of the earth and keeping the air fresh and clean.*

*In this world, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are out of balance. Earth's temperature continues to rise. This summer, many places have experienced extreme heat, as well as drought and fires. The United States, Greece, and Sweden all experienced raging forest fires that were hard to contain. These burned vast areas of land. When disasters take place far away from us, this does not mean that they are other people's business. As Earth revolves in space, the dust and ash from the fires travel great distances, polluting the air. Forest fires in Spain could not be contained and crossed the border into Portugal, raging out of control.*

*Around the world, many people are living amidst floods and fires. In the latter half of July 2018, a dam collapsed in Attapeu Province in southeastern Laos, submerging villages beneath the water. Hundreds of people were dead or missing, and more than 6,000 people became homeless. Finding a path to provide relief was difficult and required rescuers to travel through a neighboring country, crossing hills and mountain ranges. It was a tough road to travel with many difficulties, but a solution had to be found. The citizens of Laos had difficult lives to begin with. Now, they needed assistance even more desperately.*

*Tzu Chi volunteers from Thailand, Malaysia, and Taiwan came together and began to assess the disaster. People displaced by the flood were gathered together in four schools. There was not enough space, so family members had to take turns sleeping. Those who could not get indoors set up tents outside. Whenever it rained, there would be flooding. This caused the ground to be muddy at all times, so volunteers decided to provide foldable beds.*

*Every day, looking around the world, it is heartbreaking to see that the world is full of suffering. On July 29, a huge earthquake struck Lombok, Indonesia. Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia began disaster relief work. Before one week had passed, on August 5, the same place experienced an earthquake that measured 7 on the Richter scale, which killed over 400 people. Over 380,000 people fled their homes and stayed in shelters. Tzu Chi volunteers once again mobilized, conducted disaster assessments, and held relief distributions and free clinics.*

*I continue to call on everyone to be reverent and pray for blessings and safety, and I hope that these thoughts will reach the heavens above. But as we pray, we must reflect upon ourselves. Why are there so many disasters in the world?*

*It is because of the greed of human beings. People waste resources and destroy the earth. We use materials without restraint, casually discarding items in pursuit of the next trend. In this way, business*

Master Cheng Yen's Teachings August 6-14, 2018  
Compiled by the Editorial Team

*opportunities actually become opportunities to cause harm. In addition to our increasing material desires, our cravings for taste are also increasing. Worldwide, more than 190 million animals are slaughtered every day to satisfy our cravings. Not only does this create the karma of killing, but the process of raising livestock also pollutes both the land and the air.*

*Sentient beings have endless desires and create much karma over time. Thus, we naturally have to face these karmic retributions together. If we do not realize our errors, we will continue to commit the same mistakes. We must reflect and repent, immediately stop creating bad karma, and inspire everyone to give rise to sincere thoughts, cherish material items, safeguard living beings, and collectively create virtuous affinities instead of harmful affinities.*

*We must do good every day, let our every thought be pure, and maintain our virtue lifetime after lifetime.*

*Time passes by the second, and our lives also fade away with time. But because we can truly make use of this life to do good in this world, we must be mindful to cherish it.*

*Although we are already doing good deeds and are serving without expectations, we are still unable to fully liberate ourselves from the mindset of unenlightened beings. We cannot escape from*

*thoughts of "like" and "dislike," of feeling connected to some people while rejecting others. However, we are fortunate enough to be able to walk the Bodhisattva-path, to cultivate ourselves, to allow the Dharma to permeate our lives, and to go out and help others on a consistent basis. As more and more people do good deeds and get along with each other ever more joyfully, our inspiration grows as we serve others. As we quicken our pace on the Bodhisattva-path, our unenlightened thoughts will naturally subside, and we will gradually make use of our life to grow our wisdom-life. Wisdom-life is not limited by time; it is everlasting and boundless.*

*As the saying goes, "We take nothing with us when we die except for our karma." No matter how much money we have or how high-status we are, in the end, we take nothing with us. But the Buddha-Dharma tells us that if we do good deeds and cultivate good habits and a virtuous mindset every day, these "karmic seeds" will follow us into our future lives.*

*Thus, we must eliminate our past afflictions and ignorance and welcome each day with a pure heart. If we do this, the light of wisdom will always shine. Everyone, please always be mindful! 🌿*



# Sowing the Seeds of Love:

## The Journey Toward Tzu Chi's First Distribution in Mexico

By the Editorial Team | Photos: Provided by Tzu Chi USA Media Production Center

*Melt away all barriers and obstacles with love.  
With love in our heart, there is nothing we cannot overcome.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

“**W**hy did you come to help us from so far away? We are so poor and do not even have food. This is why your coming here means so much to us. May God bless all of you so that you will live long and treat many more people who need help.”

These are the words of Grandma Yolinda, a local resident who attended the first relief distribution and medical outreach held by Tzu Chi following the 2017 earthquake in Mexico. Like many others, she had suffered losses in the earthquake and had come to receive aid provided by Tzu Chi and local volunteers.

On September 19, 2017, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck Mexico's Puebla state, causing many old structures near the epicenter and in Mexico City to collapse. More than 200 people were killed, and more than 2,000 were injured.

Immediately following the earthquake, Tzu Chi volunteers began organizing to provide aid. The planning for disaster relief occurred in the midst of another series of distribution efforts to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas. Stephen Huang, Director of Global Volunteer Affairs, quickly arranged for his replacement in Houston and set up another

team of six volunteers to assess the damage in Mexico and meet with local volunteers. They first went into Jojutla, a devastated area, to assess the damage. Tzu Chi volunteers would soon find that setting up an aid distribution would be far more complicated than they could have anticipated.

### Overcoming Challenges

The Tzu Chi volunteers who arrived in Jojutla immediately ran into difficulties in their assessment efforts. Martin Kuo, a Tzu Chi volunteer from the United States who has attended countless distributions and participated in volunteer events in nineteen countries explained, “Everyone was skeptical about us. They wondered what these people in blue and white uniforms were doing there after the earthquake. They worried that we had come to scam them or steal their IDs.”

In past international disaster relief efforts, Tzu Chi was able to hold distributions within a few days after assessing the damages. However, Mexico was different. Due to activities such as drug trafficking, there were many regulations in place that made the situation different from other countries. In addition, the locals had doubts

Photo 1: Hong Liangdai asked the local residents to always remember that they live in a place full of love.

Photo 2: After the earthquake, David (right) stayed in the tent area with the affectees to provide them with assistance. Here, David interviews a care recipient in San Gregorio Atlapulco.



On December 8, 2017, Tzu Chi held a distribution in the plaza in front of the church in San Gregorio Atlapulco. Local residents lined up to enter the distribution site.

about their government's ability to help, which fostered feelings of resentment. The language barrier between Tzu Chi volunteers and those they served added to the difficulties.

Tzu Chi volunteer Hong Liangdai recalled her own struggles in making the aid distribution in Mexico a reality. While traveling from Argentina to Mexico by bus, the bus was involved in a multiple-vehicle collision. Hong fell into a coma due to her injuries, and for a time, it was uncertain whether she would live. However, after she regained consciousness, she quickly continued onward to Mexico.

During a disaster relief effort, obtaining a list of the affectees is often the most difficult and time-consuming process. Upon arriving in Mexico, Hong and the Tzu Chi team worked with the local volunteers every day to visit the affectees' homes, providing care for each family. Initially, when Hong and the Tzu Chi volunteers spoke to the Tláhuac city government, the Mayor, Mayor Rigoberdo, did not know about Tzu Chi and was thus unwilling to provide a name list. After more than ten attempts to reach out to him, the sincerity of the volunteers finally moved him, and he provided them with the complete name list of those affected.

## Sowing the Seeds of Love

On September 25, as the assessment team spent their first day evaluating the damages in Jojutla, they observed how the general public organized their own distribution sites to provide water, coffee, food, tools, and other materials. Churches also distributed hot meals to local residents.

Although volunteer organizations and churches were present, local residents told Tzu Chi volunteers that after the earthquake, the government did not organize any aid. The military and police force helped clean up the debris, and the rest of the work was done by local residents who organized themselves and volunteered. Even the heavy machinery to clear the debris was provided by local construction companies.

As Tzu Chi volunteers worked to assess the damage, they met Trinidad, an employee for the government of Xochimilco. After the earthquake, Trinidad had to mediate between government agencies and the general public, who thought that the government was being completely unsupportive. The complaints from the public brought her a great deal of stress, yet after meeting Tzu Chi volunteers, she took the

initiative to introduce Tzu Chi along the streets, even using a megaphone to do so. Because of Trinidad's enthusiasm and support, the process of collecting the affectees' information went a lot faster for the Tzu Chi team.

In the course of the disaster relief efforts, the Tzu Chi volunteers also met and recruited David, a thirty-one-year-old man who rushed to Jojutla right after the earthquake to form an emergency relief team. After three months, he still remained in a tent area to support the clean-up. Through the internet, he recruited 750 young people to join the relief work. They demolished damaged buildings for reconstruction, helped people in the process of moving, and assisted seniors with mobility issues to get to the areas where they could receive aid. During the time before the first Tzu Chi distribution, for more than two months, David lived in a tent, helping the affected without complaint. After meeting Tzu Chi volunteers, he soon joined the team.

While the local volunteers in Mexico provided critical support for the Tzu Chi team, Tzu Chi provided the environment for such efforts to thrive. When Tzu Chi volunteer Stephen Huang saw a woman moving cases of drinking water to be distributed, he had the impression that she was a very kind person and asked her if she would be willing to help. This woman, Tani, would come to meet with the team to discuss relief distributions. When she saw Master Cheng Yen's Life Wisdom program and heard her message, she started crying. In that moment, she made a vow to become a seed for Tzu Chi in Mexico. Jaime, a volunteer from San Gregorio Atlapulco, volunteered to help with the assessment for his community. Despite suffering losses himself, when offered financial assistance, he refused. "Everyone here is a volunteer. From the bottom of my heart, I want to do something for my community. I want to be with Tzu Chi." He accepted only a volunteer vest and rode a bike every day to do home visits. Local volunteer Mama Gris made tasty vegetarian

food and became a strong support for the team. She ran a break station and prepared rice soup, potato pancakes, hardboiled eggs, guacamole, salad dressing, and cucumbers, acting as the guardian mother for Tzu Chi volunteers. All of these people and many more helped to build a community of love in the course of the Mexican relief efforts.

## The Distribution

After visiting each household multiple times, by December 7, Tzu Chi volunteers and residents had overcome the difficulties and held their first distribution. Though the process had taken an unusually long two months, the distribution was successful.

As Trinidad read Master Cheng Yen's letter of support to those affected, she found it difficult to get through it due to her emotions. "When you read the letter, you can feel that the words are filled with a sense of love, unity, and support... nobody really does this. Honestly, nobody has ever done this. Everyone came to us with an agenda. They said they wanted to help us, but you need to dedicate this and that to their name.



After the distribution in

They all ask for something in return, but Master Cheng Yen never asked for anything in return.” Grateful for the love that Tzu Chi brought into the community, she also asked the locals to spread this love.

Mayor Rigoberdo came in person to the distribution and proclaimed that this day would now be known as “Tzu Chi Day.” At first, Hong Liangdai worried that the locals still harbored resentment against the mayor, so on site, she asked the locals, “What do you feel today?” They replied, “Love, deep love.” Hong Liangdai asked them to remember that Tzu Chi brought so much love to them and that they were in a place full of love. She earnestly reminded them that Tzu Chi was able to come and hold such a smooth distribution due to the city government’s support. Without their help, Tzu Chi would not have known how to distribute the relief goods to everyone. She asked them not to harbor resentment in their hearts and to make Tláhuac a city of love. “Can you all do that?” The local residents applauded loudly in agreement.

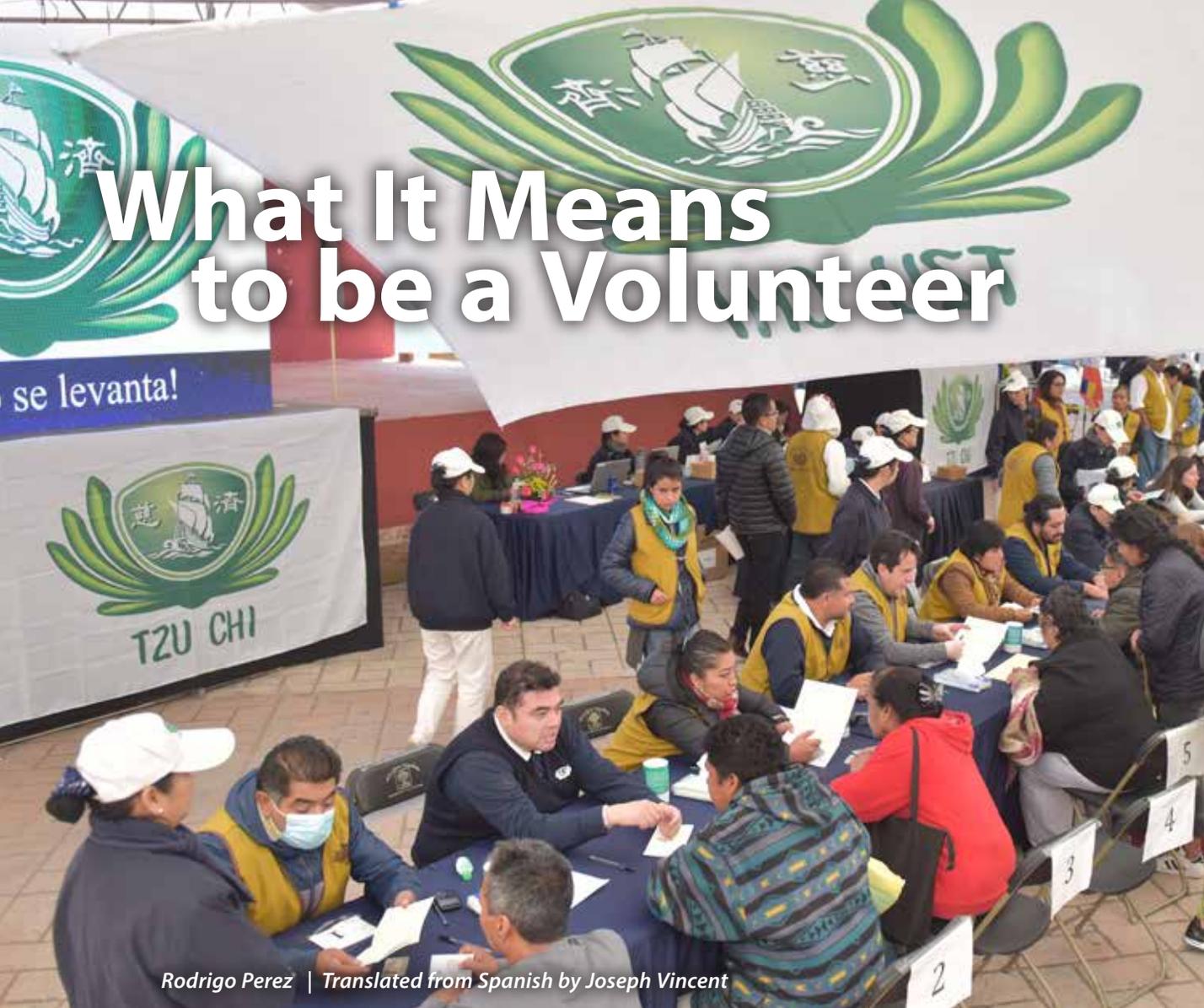
As David read Master Cheng Yen’s letter to the disaster affectees, he couldn’t help but

tear up. David rarely cried, but on the day of the distribution, he couldn’t stop the tears. “An elderly woman told me that her son died in the earthquake. After he died, nobody had helped her. She hugged me and told me that she felt that I was like her son helping her. This elderly woman made me feel honored for what I am doing now, and I am very grateful for my mother for giving me life.”

In the course of the initial two months of assessment and preparation for the Mexican relief distribution, Stephen Huang and other Tzu Chi volunteers recruited people and invited them to join the organization. By the time the distribution ended, thirteen Mexican volunteers had joined a video conference with Master Cheng Yen and had officially become Tzu Chi volunteers. By January 14, 2018, the unified efforts of Tzu Chi volunteers and local residents had resulted in ten free clinics, providing healthcare services to 5,414 people, and ten distributions, providing goods, cash cards, and eco-blankets for 10,842 families. By working together, Tzu Chi volunteers and local residents will continue to sow the seeds of love in Mexico. 🌱



San Gregorio Atlapulco, Tzu Chi volunteers and local volunteers pose for a group photo.



# What It Means to be a Volunteer

Rodrigo Perez | Translated from Spanish by Joseph Vincent

What does it truly mean to be a volunteer? The answer likely goes beyond my personal interpretation, but every time we go out to put compassion into practice, we can discover a little more about what volunteering means. In fact, these days, I have been thinking a lot about the deeper meaning of the word, which goes beyond just referring to a person who works for an organization by their own free choice. It is the actions that one takes that defines what it means to be a volunteer. A

volunteer is a person who puts his or her will toward doing good. During my short experience, I have learned that Tzu Chi focuses on every individual, whether that person is already a volunteer, a person in need of help, a person in a position of authority, or a donor. Tzu Chi gives everyone the opportunity to become a vehicle for compassion that can better their environment.

I have found that life reveals this path to us in the most unexpected ways. For me, it came after



*(Photo: Hsin-Hun Chao)*

a natural disaster, an earthquake. It was not the happiest situation, but the conditions made me appreciate life in all its facets.

When the Tzu Chi volunteers arrived in Mexico after the September 19 earthquake, I first encountered them in Xochimilco, one of the sixteen municipalities in San Gregorio. There, they were visiting the families who lived along the most affected street in the city. At that time, I was also carrying supplies to people in need. However, I did not contact the Tzu Chi volunteers until a few days

later. I was willing to help them to the best of my abilities, but I did not know how to do it.

The words “volunteer” and “voluntary” come from the Latin “voluntas,” which means the act of “will” to do something. Even though I did not know what to do at that time, it was likely my determination to do good that led me to return again and again to San Gregorio with the volunteers. This determination gave me the patience to take the bus, which sometimes took two hours to arrive due to the damages caused by the earthquake. Seeing the ways that Tzu Chi



*Rodrigo comforting a boy during the medical outreach in Xochimilco. (Photo: Héctor Muniente)*



*Rodrigo speaking at the medical outreach in Jojutla. (Photo: Chao Hsin-Hun)*



volunteers interacted with the people there allowed me to understand that I should be in that place helping as well. At times, I saw them listening as people in need shared their stories. At other times, they simply comforted people. I was deeply moved by the love of the volunteers; they were like patient parents trying to comfort their children.

Finally, after three months of walking down many streets and knocking on so many doors, we were able to help those in need, and I realized the hard work of each of the volunteers, both local and those from abroad. Being with volunteers reminded me of what it was like to be part of a big family.



*Rodrigo traveled to Jing Si Abode in Hualien at the end of February 2018 with fellow Mexican volunteers to learn more and deepen their understanding of Tzu Chi. (Photo: Lai Hui Juan)*

After all the experiences from that time, I asked myself why I should continue to help Tzu Chi's missions. I realized the best I can do is to follow those doing good deeds, and maybe over time, I would also be able to alleviate other peoples' suffering.

During the last medical outreach day in Mexico, I thought about the different realities that can be seen even in different areas of the same city. The people who came to us looking for a doctor, in



all their humility, described their discomforts and illnesses so openly. As a volunteer, I am aware of the responsibility of entering into their lives and responding with love to their openness. The best way to inspire more people is by following those who do good deeds.

In Mexico, we have many challenges, and fortunately, thanks to Tzu Chi, I have come to know many good-hearted people. Every time I have the opportunity to speak with the volunteers

from Taiwan and the United States, I am impressed by their willpower and discipline to carry out Tzu Chi's missions.

What can I share about becoming a Tzu Chi volunteer? I understand that when volunteers accept their uniform, they accept the mission to perform all acts of love, care, affection, benevolence, and service with a heart of kindness. 🌿



# Enrichment in Giving

Nathan Chen



*Those who lovingly work together with others with one heart and one mind never walk alone.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

I held up my phone to the two high school students who had come to help me sterilize dental tools. Because I didn't know any Spanish, I sometimes used Google Translate to communicate more complex messages to them. Their eyes scanned my phone screen quickly and they nodded enthusiastically. I smiled as well, holding a thumbs up for encouragement. In response, the students put on their medical gear and started scrubbing away at the used dental tools.

It was the second day of the week-long TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) Medical Outreach in Mexico, and the first time I had ever participated in a Tzu Chi international outreach. I was a little apprehensive at first. As a young member of Tzu Ching (Tzu Chi Collegiate Association), I had limited experience with large-scale Tzu Chi operations, much less with specialized medical outreaches in a foreign country. But I was determined to be as open-minded as possible in order to absorb as much as I could from those around me.

I quickly found myself working primarily with local students. In Morelos, many of the nearby schools let their students out of class so that they could come and help out. Some students helped to translate, while others guided patients through the clinic or assisted in specific treatment areas. In the dental area, the students learned how to be dental assistants. Within an hour, they were already bustling about, helping dentists treat patients, doing things that took me a month's worth of



*Nathan Chen (center) and the two high school students who helped him as dental assistants at the sterilization station. (Photo: Provided by Nathan Chen)*

weekends to figure out. One student even learned how to do X-Rays, which was something that I really struggled with.

While I did use Google Translate a few times to communicate technical terms, many of the interactions between myself and the students were simply ones of smiles and positivity. Everyone brought their best intentions to the clinic, creating an atmosphere buzzing with warmth and happiness. We were genuinely supportive of each other, striving to better the lives of the locals together. There was a simplicity in the way we interacted with basic hand gestures and smiles that seemed to come from the deepest and most authentic parts of our hearts; it was something

beyond what I had experienced during my time as a Tzu Ching in the United States. Over time, I saw these interactions blossom into long lasting-relationships. One of the physical therapists on the TIMA team, Hsinlan Chen, became very good friends with one of the high school translators who had helped her since the very first medical outreach in Mexico. Every time TIMA visited Morelos, the high schooler would make an effort to come out to help. Through consistent meetings with Hsinlan Chen, they soon became close friends and great working partners. Just as how the Tzu Chi TIMA team has established connections with Mexico and so many other countries around the world, I hope to maintain lasting relationships



*Tzu Chi volunteers from New York and a local dentist on the second day of the outreach in Morelos.  
(Photo: Provided by Nathan Chen)*



with those I meet in the future as well.

The connections I made with the local Tzu Chi volunteers in Mexico were strongest. This outreach was one of the first times I was able to have more in-depth interactions with volunteers outside the United States or Taiwan. The local volunteers were also the backbone of the medical mission. They cooked all of our meals, provided water during the clinics, and made sure that we had the proper transportation to get around. I thought that getting up at 5:30 a.m. to prepare for the clinics was exhausting until I realized that the local volunteers were up even earlier, working hard to provide breakfast for us. One of the volunteers lives five hours away from Jojutla,

one of the areas that were affected the most by the earthquake. Although he lived so far away, he was always driving over to help out with Tzu Chi's work. Because of them, I felt welcomed and could continue to help others in Mexico without worries.

While the local Tzu Chi Mexico volunteers exemplified determination and strength, the U.S. Tzu Chi volunteers acted as role models for less experienced volunteers like myself. Their ability to bring energy, happiness, and warmth to the locals was contagious. I observed volunteers dancing and conversing with locals as if they were their own family members. Some are retired but are certified in acupuncture, speak multiple languages, do journalism for Tzu Chi, or are simply accomplished

*Nathan removes dental tools from the autoclave machine after sterilization. (Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi USA Media Production Center)*



me at the sterilization station to make sure that I was comfortable with my assigned task. His relaxed attitude throughout the clinics boosted everyone's morale and made things feel much easier and enjoyable.

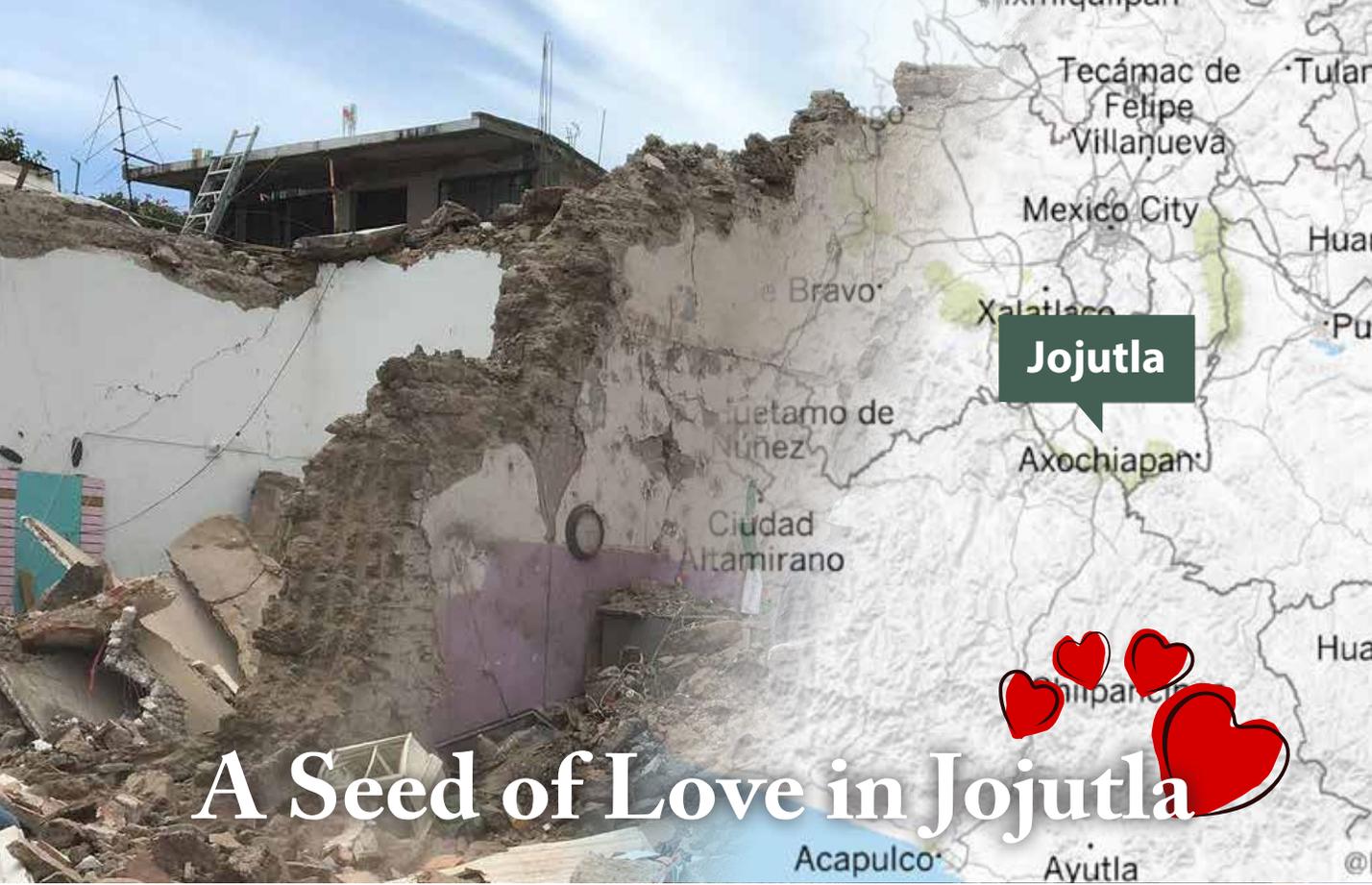
There really was no change in the way the adult volunteers behaved during or between the clinics. They exemplified that giving positivity is a lifestyle, a mindset of persistence. Whether it was rushing to set up medical equipment, dancing with local residents, doing early morning warm-up yoga, or eating ice cream together, these adult volunteers have filled their lives with contentment by bringing love to those around them.

because they have so much international disaster relief experience. I quickly realized that I had little excuse to be tired during the clinics when I observed Doctor Richard Yang ceaselessly helping patient after patient for hours on end. Conversely, Doctor Yang also understood that it was important to enjoy the moments spent with everyone, as he was constantly joking with the people around him when he wasn't at the dentist chair. He would occasionally come and check up on

After the Morelos clinics, I had the opportunity to visit the local Tzu Chi office in Jojutla. The office was filled with donations, bamboo banks, and chalkboards crammed with lists of goals and schedules. There was even a hand-painted portrait of Master Cheng Yen and a beautiful aluminum metal-worked Tzu Chi logo. I soon learned that many of the volunteers would travel to Hualien soon after this medical mission. Some were even learning Mandarin Chinese. It was inspiring to see how the missions and values of Tzu Chi have impacted so many people of different backgrounds and cultures.

What stood out the most to me was the impression that love and kindness transcend all boundaries. This is the strongest feeling I have when I reflect on my experiences on the medical outreach as a whole. Growing up with Tzu Chi and being in Tzu Ching, I grew accustomed to hearing so many stories about disaster relief, unconditional love, and volunteerism. Having the opportunity to attend the outreach in Mexico brought about a new perspective on Tzu Chi and its presence around the world. Through my time with both the volunteers from Mexico and the United States, I have come to understand how important it is to bring about genuine positivity not just in helping others, but also within my daily life. These experiences are things that I will internalize as I continue on my path as a Tzu Ching. 🌿

*Nathan Chen is currently in his last semester of the undergraduate architecture program at The University of Texas at Austin. He will continue to be involved in Tzu Chi wherever he goes after graduation.*



# A Seed of Love in Jojutla

Victor Hernandez | Photos: Provided by Victor Hernandez

*Wholeheartedly gather the power of love and create a cycle of love.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~



Victor (left) listens intently to a care recipient sharing her story.

Early in life, Master Cheng Yen realized that in order for the impoverished to have a better quality of life, they would need access to high-quality medical care. Master Cheng Yen wanted to provide quality healthcare that would be able to reach everyone in society. Beginning with a group of thirty

housewives, she has continued her hard work with what are now thousands of volunteers around the world. In this way, they are fulfilling one of Tzu Chi's missions.

TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) doctors have been a crucial part of Master Cheng Yen's vision of helping the poor. From the very beginning, this medical association has been driven by the vision of curing sickness, healing people, and healing hearts. TIMA became an international association in 1988 and has since been present in many countries around the world.

Since the September 2017 earthquake, TIMA and Tzu Chi volunteers have been visiting Mexico to hold free clinics for people in need. The clinics have been held in Mexico City and in small towns throughout the state of Morelos.

The people of Mexico have taken Tzu Chi's mission to heart, and as they follow the teachings of Master Cheng Yen, their love is growing day by day. Even more apparent is the work done by volunteers in the small towns of Tlaquiltenango and Jojutla in the state of Morelos. In these towns, Tzu Chi volunteers have organized themselves into a dynamic group that embraces Master Cheng Yen's teachings with open hearts and minds. Not only do they help individuals on a one-on-one basis through home visits, they also serve as the foundation of the free clinic run by volunteers from the United States and Taiwan.

Their network of volunteers has reached out to governmental and non-governmental organizations around the two towns. These efforts to engage locals continue to make every free clinic a great success. Some volunteers from Mexico, such as Yvonne Garcia and David Hernandez, have even had the opportunity to visit Master Cheng Yen in Hualien.

In the free clinic held from September 1 to September 3 on 2018, many organizations made their appearance and contributed free services. Their cooperative efforts brought a hairstylist who gave free haircuts, an optometrist who gave free exams, a doctor who came to do acupuncture, and a psychologist who provided counselling for the earthquake survivors, even on her birthday. All of these services would not have been possible

without the support of many other local volunteers heeding the call of Master Cheng Yen's teachings. The residents of the small town of Tlaquiltenango were also inspired by this charitable work. They volunteered willingly and brought their children to do the same. They showed up happily in the early hours of the morning and did not leave until everything had been put away, late in the day.

As amazing as this may seem, there were even more volunteers who, having taken the Dharma and Master Cheng Yen's teachings to heart, expressed their love for all the residents of their community. This includes the children from the Morelos Institute, a school that Tzu Chi is rebuilding. From the principal of the school, Sister Adelina Ensur Esperalta, to its teachers and students, they all did everything they could to support the Tzu Chi volunteers.

These pure-hearted children devoted themselves to helping the residents of the town get the healthcare that they need most. By serving as translators, they took on the voices of doctors. Some of these children were very young, and were only in the ninth grade, and

others were seniors in the eleventh

grade. They were dropped off every morning by happy mothers who later also stayed to help the residents of the town. Divided into groups,



*Sister Adelina, the principal of Morelos Institute, speaks during the prayer on the morning of the free clinic.*

these students assisted Tzu Chi doctors, nurses, volunteers, and dentists; they assisted with intake, and at the pharmacy.

It was at the pharmacy that I met a group of extraordinary children dedicated to helping the residents with all their hearts. One child, Aranza, came every day and cared for patients by explaining how and when to take their medications. She explained to me that she was in the ninth grade, and that when she heard her teachers announce that there was going to be a free clinic, she wanted to help as much as she could. She was at the clinic every day early in the morning, making sure that the medication went to the right patients. In stature, she is petite for her age, but her heart is twice as big. The way she worked without complaint and cared so much for the patients touched my heart. It was hard not to notice her because of her small size and lively eyes, which shone with love.



*At the clinic, Aranza speaks to a patient about her medication.*

Not all of these children were personally affected by the earthquake, but they came to volunteer out of love and care for their community. Most used technology, such as cell phones, to check the meaning of English words. Many were put

into challenging situations that they had never experienced before at their early age. However, the great love given by the doctors and volunteers allowed them to relax and open up to provide relief to the patients. By the last day of the free clinic, the children and doctors were close friends and helped every patient mindfully.

On a rare free moment, I had the pleasure of talking to Sister Adelina, the principal of the Morelos Institute. During our conversation, she shared that the children were very excited to come and volunteer with Tzu Chi. Some, she told me, arrived without having eaten breakfast. I asked parents about it and they told me that they had brought their children so that the children would have something to eat during the day. Tzu Chi also provided food for them during lunch and breaks.

Sister Adelina said that when the earthquake struck, no one at the school was injured because they had been practicing earthquake drills very diligently. Thus, everyone managed to exit the school in a quick and organized manner. Sister Adelina then shared that because the school was heavily damaged by the earthquake, they had to hold classes at different venues so the children would not miss their school year. She shared that right after the earthquake, all they could do was pray and have faith in God that a miracle was on its way. I shared with Sister Adelina that Master Cheng Yen teaches us that faith is the greatest virtue. She happily agreed.

Sister Adelina told me that she didn't know the miracle was going to come in the form of Tzu Chi volunteers and their promise to rebuild the school into a school that could withstand earthquakes. She said that the spirit of Tzu Chi has filled the hearts of all the staff and sisters in the school, and that the only way for her to thank them was by coming to the clinic and offering a helping hand.

Children from the school share the same values taught by the sisters. They said that it was a pleasure to come and help translate for the doctors. At first, they felt a bit nervous, and they had no confidence in their own skills. However, they later noticed that the doctors were very friendly, and this made them more confident.

The circle of love has been growing bigger and bigger ever since the earthquake struck. This circle has come to embrace not only the local volunteers, but the next generation of citizens in Morelos.

This experience of serving in Mexico has deepened my resolve to work hard for Tzu Chi and become a more diligent student of Master Cheng Yen. The love and care that all the volunteers have shown to total strangers is both heartwarming and touching. The heartfelt devotion of parents and teachers to volunteering with Tzu Chi is extraordinary.

Tzu Chi Jojutla is just a small seed planted in

the heart of Mexico, but it is still growing. Master Cheng Yen always reminds us that kindness and love are like lotus seeds that will grow into beautiful flowers. Tzu Chi members give support to one another and show love and care no matter where they are. Helping one another in times of need seems like such a simple idea. But to remain here for an entire year after the disaster while continuing to work with smiling faces is no easy feat. Yet now that the idea has been planted and the desire to grow is stirring, there is nothing that cannot be achieved.

I would like to thank Master Cheng Yen for giving me this opportunity to travel all the way to Mexico and bear witness to one of Tzu Chi's missions. I would like to thank all the brothers and sisters who have supported me in Mexico and shared their love with me. When I am working alongside them, I have nothing to be afraid of. I feel the sense of duty and responsibility to continue Master Cheng Yen's mission in a faraway land. The work is not hard for me because we are all working together for the same goal: to relieve suffering and promote Master Cheng Yen's vision for a better future around the world. 🌱

*Victor Hernandez is a Salvadorian-Canadian Tzu Chi volunteer who produces videos for Tzu Chi's 3-in-1 documentation team. Victor works as an early childhood educator at the YMCA of greater Toronto and has served as a Sunday school teacher for three years at a local Catholic school.*

Martin leads the participants of the Cash-for-Relief program in a cheer as they prepare to begin cleaning their homes after the floods in Ecuador in 2017. (Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi USA)



# Without a Moment's Hesitation

Victor Rocha Jr.

*True blessing comes from being content with one's station in life and from a tireless dedication to give without asking for anything in return.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

For the majority of Tzu Chi volunteers, the break of dawn means waking up to a new day of going to school, working, staying at home, or participating in local volunteer events. This fairly steady routine allows the luxury of being close to friends, families, and local conveniences. It provides a sense of consistency in an otherwise chaotic world. Once in a while however, natural and manmade disasters adversely affect the lives of people around the world, and a select few of

Tzu Chi's volunteers are suddenly called to serve in faraway places. Their lives become everything but predictable.

Martin Kuo, from Tzu Chi USA Headquarters Region, is one such volunteer. For the past twenty years, Martin has been volunteering his time with Tzu Chi, serving as a local volunteer lead, Deputy Director for the Administration Department of Tzu Chi USA Headquarters, primary contact for disasters in the Americas, and long-term disaster

relief coordinator in Ecuador. The last of these positions has kept Martin thousands of miles away from his family and community for over sixty-eight days in Ecuador, in circumstances many readers would find difficult to imagine.

Martin has always been a dedicated husband, father, and businessman. Despite being born in Taiwan and emigrating to the United States, prior to 1999, Martin was not aware that Tzu Chi even existed. He was first introduced to the organization by one of the Headquarters Region volunteers, Susan Chen. At the time, Susan worked as General Manager at one of Martin's businesses. Suddenly, Susan began taking time off at the same hour to go out, and often returned looking distressed. Naturally, Martin was curious about this and asked what she was doing on these outings. She informed him that she was going to local restaurants to raise money for the 921 Earthquake in Taiwan, with little success. Due to his many connections to local businesses, Martin offered to help. With this small charitable action, Martin began his work with Tzu Chi.

As the years went by, Martin took on more and more responsibilities as a local volunteer, but it was his ability to participate in international relief missions at a moment's notice that would lead him to the position he is in now, as a disaster relief coordinator. This position has taken him far beyond Southern California. As a lead contact for disaster relief in the Americas, he has kept in close

contact with the Jing Si Abode in Hualien and has traveled to nineteen countries to coordinate relief efforts on behalf of Tzu Chi. In all his time carrying out relief missions, none has been more consequential than the work he has done for the people of Ecuador.

Shortly after the 2016 Ecuador Earthquake, Martin received a call from Hualien urging him to prepare to go to Ecuador. On April 27, 2016, Martin's team arrived there. Martin led the nine-person assessment team through five cities. He spoke to mayors, aides, and responders to assess the situation in the disaster areas. On the way to the city of Manta, Martin's team met with the personal advisor to the president of Ecuador, who requested that they provide assistance to the town of Canoa, an isolated town with a population of between 6,000-8,000 people. Because of its very small size, the advisor was concerned that the town would not receive much help from the federal government for at least several months, and thus, he requested Tzu Chi to help. It was in this small town that the Tzu Chi team would find an opportunity to make a big difference. In his first trip alone, Martin would stay in Ecuador for nearly forty days.

## **Cash-for-Relief**

When asked how he is able to dedicate so much of himself to his work in Tzu Chi, Martin explains how fortunate he is to have spoken with

Master Cheng Yen many times during his time with Tzu Chi. Whether meeting with her in person at the Abode or over conference call in the midst of Tzu Chi's relief efforts, Master Cheng Yen has always given him advice on aspects of the relief that might have otherwise been overlooked. It was during one such conference call in Ecuador that Master Cheng Yen suggested that instead of holding a cash card distribution in Canoa, Martin and his team should implement the Cash-for-Relief program. When presented with the idea, the mayor of Canoa was delighted with the concept. Tzu Chi thus began a work program to pay up to \$15 per day to members of the community to work on cleaning, rebuilding their town and homes, and doing other tasks that would provide services to people in need. The Cash-for-Relief program not only revitalized the local economy, it inspired residents of the town. Morale, hope, and optimism soon began to increase, and local residents expressed deep gratitude to Tzu Chi volunteers. They expressed that the program had given them a sense of purpose and pride in the time following the disaster. Because of such thoughtfulness on the part of Master Cheng Yen, Martin has always looked to her for inspiration in continuing the tireless work that he does as a volunteer.

In the course of relief work, Martin frequently interacts with people going through extreme suffering and hardship, and he is no stranger to

hardship himself. When Martin was thirty-one, his daughter became very ill and had to be taken to a hospital. After his daughter's recovery, his family received a hospital bill for \$1,200, which Martin was unable to pay at that time due to a lack of money. This left Martin embarrassed that as a parent, he could not afford to properly care for his family. Hoping to work out some type of repayment, Martin spoke to the physician and told him that he would pay him back for helping his daughter. Unexpectedly, the doctor replied, "You don't have to pay it back, instead pay it forward. Just remember what you've been through, and pay it forward." It has been decades since then, but Martin still thinks about that day and continues to pay it forward with the help of Tzu Chi and its members. Yet even now, Master Cheng Yen asks Martin, "What are you waiting for?" She hopes that Martin can leave behind his business and dedicate one hundred percent of his time to Tzu Chi's charity mission. Martin feels that he is dedicating about eighty percent of his time to Tzu Chi, a percentage he intends to steadily increase, yet he is always ready to drop everything at a moment's notice to take on a new mission from Hualien without hesitation.

### **Bringing Hope to Canoa**

After implementing the Cash-for-Relief program to provide financial assistance to the people of Canoa, Martin's efforts shifted to long-



*Martin, Sister Yolanda Gill, and William Keh cut the ribbon to the dormitory building at Canoa Church. (Photo: Gina Shih)*

term recovery. One of the major projects the Tzu Chi team has been working on, even up to now, has been the rebuilding of the Canoa Church. When the church collapsed in the earthquake, the people of Canoa were left without a place in their community to gather, worship, or to find calm after the disaster. Thus, the Tzu Chi team decided that the church would be rebuilt as a means to raise the spirits of the town residents. As part of the rebuilding process, a “Vegetarian Program” was started in which forty to sixty people in the town are employed every day to rebuild the church, while housewives are employed to prepare two vegetarian meals a day. The three Catholic sisters of

Canoa were instrumental in implementing and supporting this program and expressed their gratitude for the support that Tzu Chi has shown the town.

When he reflects on these current efforts, Martin thinks back to the story of the three Catholic sisters who inspired Master Cheng Yen many decades ago before Tzu Chi was started. In a conversation between Catholic sisters and Master Cheng Yen,

the sisters had asked why Buddhism had not been applied in society with the establishment of schools, orphanages, nursing homes, and other institutions. This conversation had profoundly moved Master Cheng Yen and inspired her to establish Tzu Chi to benefit people with the spirit of compassion and love. Now, as Tzu Chi partners with Catholic sisters in Canoa to rebuild the church there, the circumstances have come around full-circle. Indeed, the rebuilding of the church has special significance to Master Cheng Yen herself, and she has encouraged Martin and the Tzu Chi team in Ecuador to devote themselves



*Martin hands out volunteer vests to local residents in Ecuador participating in the Cash-for-Relief program in Canoa after the 2016 earthquake. (Photo: Provided by the Ecuador disaster relief team)*

to this

project with their deepest sincerity. As of February 2019, the dormitories have been finished and the church is scheduled to be finished in May 2019, two months ahead of schedule.

Looking back on his fifteen years of service as a Tzu Chi volunteer, Martin feels grateful that his missions have opened his eyes to how fortunate he is in life and the opportunities that he has been blessed with. Traveling the world and seeing the ordeals that many people have to overcome in their daily lives in order to survive has given Martin a broader perspective on life. When the Cash-for-Relief program was implemented in Ecuador, Martin was surprised that earning \$12 per day was making the locals some of the happiest people

he had ever seen. He thought, “They make \$12 a day and it makes them the happiest people in the world. How much do we need to make us happy? \$120? \$1,200? \$12,000? What is the limit?” As a businessman, Martin had always aspired to achieve the “American dream” and “make it big,” but

today, his thoughts on life are vastly different than what they were then. Life is simpler. Martin has taken on the mission of helping others; while at home, he is devoted to his family. Martin knows that being available any time Master Cheng Yen needs his assistance is a luxury that very few volunteers have. With this in mind, Martin makes it his priority to do the most he can do and serve as many as he can. He embodies the true spirit of Tzu Chi and inspires others by the example of his service. 🌱

*Victor is a Tzu Chi volunteer in East Los Angeles. He works as a translator for medical professionals and is a volunteer photographer at Tzu Chi USA Headquarters. His wishes are to inspire volunteers and recipients alike by being an example to all.*



靜思書軒  
JING SI BOOKS & CAFE

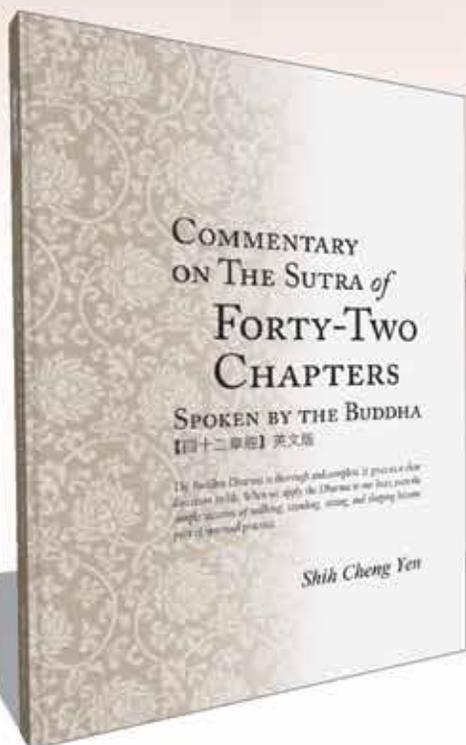
# COMMENTARY ON THE SUTRA of FORTY-TWO CHAPTERS

SPOKEN BY THE BUDDHA

《四十二章經》 英文版

*Sutra of Forty-Two Chapters* covers the essence of the Buddhist teachings. For beginning spiritual practitioners, this sutra is truly the best entry point to the profound Buddha-Dharma.

Master Cheng Yen's detailed explanations and apt interpretations have further closed the gap between this sutra and people living in our current time. The text enables Buddhist practitioners to approach the Buddha-Dharma with ease and further helps them to develop their wisdom, leading them to do good deeds and practice diligently.



Author: *Shih Cheng Yen*

Translation: Dharma as Water Team,  
Tzu Chi USA

Price: \$19

Book copies are available in Jing Si  
Books & Café.



New York Tzu Chi ▶ volunteers and Tzu Shao (middle and high school volunteers) visited residents at the Union Plaza Care Center to brighten up their weekend and bring them joy. (Photo: Peter Chu)



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers and students of the Tzu Chi Academy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania visited residents at a local nursing home to celebrate Christmas with them, bringing them joy by giving gifts and spending time with them. (Photo: Lin Jialin)



▲ During the holiday season, Tzu Chi volunteers in Hawaii held a hot meal service at the Institute of Human Services shelters. In addition to providing lunch, volunteers also provided entertainment and gifts to shelter residents in hopes of bringing them holiday joy. (Photo: Alex Ma)



◀ Austin Independent School District held a training workshop in which 82 teachers from 75 schools participated. Tzu Chi volunteers at the Austin Service Center were invited to share about Tzu Chi and promote vegetarianism. Volunteer Andrew Liu interacts with the audience. (Photo: Fangwen Huang)



Tzu Chi USA Headquarters held a press conference for the Hope Heals campaign, a fundraising campaign to encourage the public to support and donate to those affected by the California wildfires. At the press conference, they also gave the firefighters gift baskets donated by 99 Ranch Market to express gratitude for their dedication. (Photo: Wesley Tsai)

In December 2018, the Boston ▶ Service Center held the Send Warmth in the Cold Winter Charity Concert, partnering with the community to raise funds for international disaster relief. The MIT Cambridge Chinese Choral Society performed the song, "Farewell to Cambridge." (Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi Boston Service Center)



▲ The Washington, D.C. Regional Office holds Great Love Respite Camps on a monthly basis, accompanying children with autism spectrum disorders for one day. Volunteers design many sensory integration activities for the children. Here, one of the children focuses on playing a cup stacking game. (Photo: Benny Cheng)



▲ The San Gabriel Valley Service Center holds regular "Happy Senior Classes" for the elderly in the community. Volunteers developed a variety of classes and activities to help enrich the lives of the elderly. For the Lantern Festival, volunteers arranged for the attendees to make hanging lantern ornaments out of recycled red envelopes. Here, a volunteer helps an attendee to make the lantern. (Photo: Luca Ye)



◀ Giving is not restricted by age. Students from the Great Love Preschool in Dallas made cookies to raise funds for people affected by the wildfires in California. (Photo: Shirley Wu)



◀ The Northwest Regional Office held two Year-end Blessing Ceremonies at the Milpitas High School Gym, inviting volunteers and community members from Oakland, Fremont, San Jose, Cupertino, and other cities. Over 1,000 people participated in the ceremonies, and many people brought back bamboo banks, donating their money to help people in need. (Photo: Chen Zhengdao)



◀ After Tzu Chi volunteers at the Central Regional Office learned that many students in Weiss Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, do not have thick jackets to keep them warm in the cold, they quickly arranged for a jacket distribution. As they helped the students put on their jackets, many volunteers felt as if they were putting jackets on their own grandchildren. (Photo: Lin Youli)

# One More Candle to the Light

Producer & Singer: Wakin Chau

Music: Homan Chou

Lyrics: Fay Chou, Homan Chou

*I know it's a small change,  
but coming from the heart,  
every little bit becomes a lot.*

*Helping and giving  
for nothing in return,  
I want to do my part  
and take my turn.*

*For every kindness we show,  
love will come back tenfold.  
That's when I started to know.  
That's when my heart began to grow.  
It's just a tiny flame,  
but a thousand light up the darkest night.  
I'm adding one more candle to the light.*

*That's when I started to know.  
That's when my heart began to grow.  
It's just a tiny flame.  
But a thousand light up the darkest night.  
I'm adding one more candle to the light.*



**Reflection:**

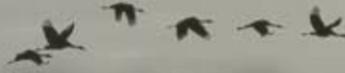
In 2014, Hong Kong-Taiwanese singer Wakin Chau was invited by Tzu Chi USA to perform at a series of charity concerts. Learning about the story of Tzu Chi and its origins with thirty housewives saving fifty cents per day in bamboo banks, he and his nephew, Homan Chou, were inspired to create two songs especially for Tzu Chi, “So I Stand Up” and “One More Candle to the Light.” Both songs have been played at countless disaster relief efforts throughout the USA, most notably during the relief work in Texas after Hurricane Harvey. Many aid recipients expressed how touched they felt by its message of empowerment and compassion.

*Music, like love, can form connections between people, no matter when or where. Tzu Chi volunteers will often sing Tzu Chi songs with people to bring hope and joy in troubled times. Please scan the QR code on this page to enjoy the music video for this song.*





# The Little Bird Who Put Out a Forest Fire



The Buddha once said, “The great Bodhi-path is a straight and direct path.” The Bodhisattva-path is a path that is great, broad, and direct. In choosing a path to follow, we do not need to take roundabout routes; all we need to do is embrace selfless great love and move straight forward. I have always believed that as long as everyone gives a little, the joint efforts of many people can generate power and inscribe profound and long-lasting stories in history.

A long time ago, there was a forest with many animals living in it. One day, a small forest fire broke out. As the winds grew stronger, the fire quickly spread, and soon, the entire forest was in flames. The birds and animals in the forest were afraid and did not know what to do.

At this time, a little bird saw the raging

fire. Worrying about the birds and animals, he suddenly thought of a way to save the forest. Dipping his wings into a river nearby, he flew to the forest and flapped his wings, sprinkling the drops of water he had collected to put out the fire.

One trip after another, the little bird flew back and forth. Over time, his wings were scorched by the heat. Even though the other birds had fled for their lives, the little bird persisted, putting in his best effort to save the forest. An eagle saw the little bird and flew up to him. He tried to convince the little bird to fly away.

However, the little bird insisted on staying to save the forest. Touched, the eagle joined in, collecting water and flapping his wings as well. Soon, they were joined by a group of eagles who were also touched by the little

*If we wish to perfect our spiritual practice on the Bodhisattva-path,  
we must not be intimidated by any mental or physical hardship.  
With perseverance and courage, we will reach our goal.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

bird's actions. More and more eagles saw this, and eventually, everyone came to help. Because their wings were bigger, when the group of eagles used their wings to retrieve water in order to save the forest, the water coming down onto the forest fire became like a steady drizzle of rain. Again and again, the birds flew back and forth to put out the fire and save the forest. But the fire was still too big.

A heavenly being had been watching the scene from up above. He had seen the little bird's actions from the start, and thus, went to the little bird to talk to him. The heavenly being remarked, "The forest is so big that it spans tens of thousands of miles, and your wings are so small that they can only carry a few drops of water. Even with your friends, you will not be able to bring enough water. How are you going to put out such a big fire?" The little bird replied, "I love the animals living here in

the forest, and I have made a great vow to put out this fire. I have faith that as long as I am dedicated and persistent, I will definitely be able to extinguish it!"

The heavenly being heard this and was very touched by the little bird's compassionate vow. Thus, he decided to bring down a great downpour, and finally, rain began to fall. The forest fire was extinguished.

This story tells us that each one of us can make a difference. As long as a deed is good, we should do it, no matter how small the deed is. We should never disregard the importance of a single good thought, and we should not fear that our power is limited, as taking action is better than inaction. A single thought can make a difference, and if we work together with unity, harmony, and love, we can further inspire others and change the world. 🌱

# Jing Si Thai Pineapple Rice

Text by Tzu Chi USA | Photos: Mark Ladao

*“Only when love and kindness fill our hearts will the world be free of disasters.”*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

In 2006, Tzu Chi provided disaster relief in Mainland China. After delivering bags of rice to the homes of elderly care recipients, volunteers were surprised to see how the recipients would just sit down and look at the rice. Why didn't they cook it? The recipients lacked the fuel and the energy needed to cook the rice. When Master Cheng Yen heard about this, she wondered if it would be possible to develop a rice that didn't require cooking. One of the nuns at the Jing Si Abode, Master De Han, took it upon herself to develop such a product, and after two years of experimentation, she had perfected Jing Si Instant Rice.

Since then, Jing Si Instant Rice has played an important role in many Tzu Chi disaster relief efforts. Perhaps most notable was in Tacloban, Philippines, after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. With the instant rice, Tzu Chi volunteers were able to provide 30,000 portions of delicious, hot food to disaster survivors daily during the immediate relief phase.

However, Jing Si Instant Rice is not only useful in disaster situations – it also provides a way to make a quick and delicious dinner in our busy lives, and it can be adapted to make a variety of filling and nutritious meals. This recipe for Thai Pineapple Rice is flavored with curry, pineapple, and cashew nuts! 🥬

**Thai Pineapple Rice** (5 servings, total preparation time around 25 min)

**Ingredients:**

- 5 portion packs Jing Si Instant Rice (including flavor pack, e.g. Golden Corn flavor)
- 1/4 cup Jing Si Thai Spicy Powder *OR* 2-3 tablespoons curry powder
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2.5 cups boiling water
- 2 cans of pineapple chunks (drained) *OR* one fresh pineapple
- 1/2 cup frozen peas or edamame
- 1/2 cup carrot, diced
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro
- 1/4 cup green onion (finely chopped)
- 1/4 cup basil leaves
- 1/2 cup currants *OR* raisins
- 1/2 cup roasted unsalted whole cashews or almond flakes
- 1 lime
- Black pepper to taste



**Directions:**

1. In a pot or large bowl, mix the Jing Si Instant Rice with the flavor packs. Add in oil, salt, soy sauce and Thai Spicy Powder/curry powder and stir to mix.
2. Pour the boiling water into the rice mix. Stir until it becomes a homogenous mixture and ensure there are no dry spots. Cover for 20 minutes.
3. Cut the pineapple into small chunks.
4. After 20 minutes, add pineapple, diced carrot, peas, currants/raisins, and cashews to the rice and mix well.
5. Squeeze lime juice over the rice.
6. Garnish with green onion, cashews/almond flakes, cilantro, and basil.



On October 28, ▶  
Tzu Chi volunteers  
in Singapore held a  
distribution event for  
Indian care recipients  
to celebrate Diwali  
together. Outside in the  
heavy rain, volunteers  
held umbrellas, warmly  
welcoming the care  
recipients as they arrived.  
(Photo: Zeng Meizhen)



▲ On December 2, Tzu Chi volunteers from Malacca, Malaysia visited a care recipient who had suffered a stroke. They prepared a Christmas tree and gifts for the whole family so that this Catholic family could celebrate Christmas happily.  
(Photo: Yang Xiuli)



▲ On December 9, Tzu Chi volunteers in Guatemala traveled to San Juan Sacatepequez to conduct a home visit to understand the care recipient's circumstances. Two years before, the care recipient (first from the right) was diagnosed with leukemia and subsequently dropped out of school. Here, volunteers ask the care recipient's mother about her current health condition.  
(Photo: Ye-Wu Lizhu)



◀ The 2018 Overseas Tzu Chi Volunteer Spiritual Retreat was held at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall, in Sanchong, Taiwan. Hundreds of volunteers from around the world were certified by Master Cheng Yen. Here, volunteers receiving certification sit up straight and put their palms together during the rehearsal for the certification ceremony. (Photo: Xiao Jiaming)



▲ On November 25, volunteers from Australia's Gold Coast Service Center traveled to Ipswich to hold a Year-end Blessing Ceremony event. They distributed daily necessities to care recipients to help alleviate their economic burden. Care recipients passed on the love by donating their spare change to help more people in need. (Photo: Li Xiaoli)



▲ Since the earthquake in 2010, Tzu Chi has continued to provide aid to Haiti. Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States and Haiti held large scale distributions in Port-au-Prince from January 21 to January 24. On January 22, volunteers distributed rice to parents of students from the School of Onnasch, as well as severely impoverished residents in the area. The residents were filled with joy after receiving the rice. (Photo: Grace Wong)

On September 28, ▶ a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Sulawesi, Indonesia. Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia provided disaster relief in hard-hit areas. They distributed hot meals and material goods, and provided medical aid and comfort. (Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi Indonesia)



▲ On November 22, Tzu Chi volunteers in Chile distributed material goods to a family in need from Venezuela. Volunteers brought cooking appliances, mattresses, food, and other daily necessities to improve their quality of life. (Photo: Liao Qinjiu)



▲ On September 22, Tzu Chi volunteers from Johannesburg, South Africa traveled to Soweto to distribute rice and other materials to the blind. Here, a Tzu Ching (collegiate volunteer) helps a recipient by carrying the rice she received. (Photo: Ken Tsai)



◀ Southern Taiwan endured days of heavy rain, which resulted in flooding in many areas. On August 25, using bamboo rafts to transport drinking water and food, Tzu Chi volunteers visited the locals and distributed hot meals in Yizhu Township, Jiayi County. (Photo: Chen Lizhen)



▲ During the Lunar New Year, Tzu Chi volunteers in Xiamen, China visit different stores of the chain restaurant, Your Neighborhood Restaurant, to do recycling. Even though the Lunar New Year is a time for families to gather together, volunteers did not take a break from their daily recycling-visits to the restaurants. Here, volunteers work together to carry the recycled materials. (Photo: Fan Shenghua)



▲ From July 22-28, TIMA held a free clinic in Jordan to provide medical treatment to Syrian refugees and the poor. Here, volunteer Lily Ramian (second from the left) helps during the outreach. (Photo: Zhan Jinde)

# *The Spirit of Love in the Midst of Fire*

By the Editorial Team



Paradise, California is a town in the Sierra Nevada foothills, dating back to the days of the gold rush. Located about one hundred miles away from the state capital of Sacramento and about fifteen miles from the closest city of Chico, it is home to 26,000 people who live and work there peacefully.

Here, the scenery is beautiful, and the customs are rustic; residents will bake cookies and make coffee for their neighbors. Many families have lived here for generations, and it is common to

have multiple generations living together in the same house. “In California, where prices are constantly on the rise, Paradise is one of the few towns where you can live on a fixed income,” Sarah, a professor at California State University, Chico, explains.

Every day in Chico, thousands of people from Paradise commute to work; Skyway Road is the only highway connecting the two cities. As such, when a forest fire started on the morning of November 8, 2018, this road became the only path to escape by.

*On November 8, 2018, a wildfire broke out in Butte County, California. Among the hardest hit areas was the town of Paradise, which was almost completely wiped out by the fire. (Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi USA Media Production Center)*



## **Paradise Burning**

It was shortly after six in the morning when a forest fire, known as the Camp Fire, started near Paradise. Soon, residents of Paradise began to receive evacuation orders. Residents on the east side of town were the first to evacuate. In a little over an hour, the residents of the entire town were evacuated. One mother received a call from her husband and rushed to the school to pick up their two children. When she returned home, she found that the fire had reached their neighbor's house. As they quickly rushed to evacuate, what should

have been a five-minute drive took her three hours. During that time, she lost contact with her husband, and it was not until much later that she was able to find him. He had abandoned his own car in the fire to escape.

The fires roared on both sides of Skyway Road, chasing after the cars evacuating from Paradise. People were terrified.

One man drove his truck to escape his house that was already engulfed in flames. When he saw a few children standing on the side of the road, he urged them to quickly jump onto his truck, but

they did not dare to get into a stranger's car. With the flames coming fiercely and quickly, he could only step on the gas pedal to rush out of the sea of fire. He managed to escape, but in his side mirrors, through the heavy smoke, he saw the lingering image of the children disappearing into the fire.

After two days, the chaotic departure was evident on the roadway outside the scorched city: burnt skeletons of cars and trucks, cars that had collided, and cars that people abandoned after they ran out of gas were littered along the road.

"It looks like a war zone." After visiting the burned city of Paradise, California, Governor Jerry Brown was at a loss for words.

In Chico, where the evacuees fled, the aisles of the grocery stores were emptied, and there were long lines outside the gas stations. The fortunate people who had escaped were evacuated to the church and community center in Chico, with kind-hearted local residents cooking hot meals. At the evacuation shelter, the television broadcasted disaster updates around the clock; the number of people reported dead or missing constantly rose, as the bulletin board outside the shelter was covered with information and photos of people's missing family members. The number of missing persons had increased to more than 600 people at one point. Many waited anxiously as the disaster took a heavy emotional toll on the survivors. People exchanged stories of escape, heroic deeds, and death as the town of Paradise turned into ash overnight.

## The Warmth of a Blanket

The Camp Fire destroyed a total of 19,537 buildings in Paradise, of which 13,972 were residential. At present [November 26], 296 people are still missing, and rescue workers are still searching through the rubble.

On the second day of the fire, the Tzu Chi Northwest Region Office in Northern California immediately began mobilizing for disaster relief. In addition to immediately transporting 550 blankets to three large shelters to provide relief to the survivors, the team held a Disaster Relief Mobilization meeting to plan for the disaster relief.



*The Northwest Regional Office began its relief efforts on November 9, 2018, delivering 550 blankets to three different shelters and handing them out to the evacuees. (Photo: Nancy Ku)*

The boxes of blankets that were sent to the shelters became essential. At night, the temperature dropped below fifty degrees Fahrenheit. When the disaster survivors received the blankets, they held on tight to the volunteers' hands. Though the volunteers' hands were cold, the evacuees exclaimed, "Thank you for your warm hearts. It is great to have you here."

In the process of distributing the blankets, the volunteers saw many pairs of hands that were left ashen and trembling after the fire. They were deeply saddened. After a woman received the blanket, she kept asking volunteers how to pronounce "Tzu Chi," which was printed on the blanket, and what it means, because she wanted to remember who gave her warmth during those cold nights.

Due to her pets, Gail Munro could not stay in the shelter and could only sleep in her car. The week after the disaster, the temperatures at night dropped below thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit, and she spent those nights in the freezing cold. When Gail came to apply for relief aid, volunteer Nancy Ku gave her a blanket, which finally allowed her to sleep well at night. "You are an angel! You are an angel!" Gail said excitedly. As Nancy embraced her, she gradually calmed down.

The town of Paradise had experienced another fire ten years previously. At that time, Donna had received a blanket from Tzu Chi. "I keep it on my bed all the time, folding it up and laying it at the

end of my bed. I look at it every day as a reminder of Master Cheng Yen's blessing." Unfortunately, ten years later, her house was again engulfed by a wildfire.

Donna was in tears as she recalled the flames surrounding her car from all sides. She had felt like her life was coming to an end, but miraculously, she rushed out of the fire, even saving two Hispanic teenagers who had been burned as they were trying to save people. In a period of ten years, she experienced wildfires twice, but she was helped by people from many different places. Through these experiences, Donna experienced the unconditional love of people, and she felt lucky to be alive.

### **Quietly Listening**

On November 16, the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) began operations. Tzu Chi volunteers drove on Skyway Road, with the air around them filled with white smoke and ashes. A deer with burn injuries wandered along, and blackened cars were everywhere. In the mailboxes were letters that had been left behind in the rush. Churches had burnt down, and there were broken telephone poles hanging mid-air.

At the DRC, volunteers quietly listened to the survivors' experiences. Behind the tears were countless heartbreaking stories.

While Keiley Ellidt sat in the recovery center filling a form with her information, her two



*Having lost everything, Skye could only sleep in the car, missing her father. She just wanted to go back to simpler days, as everything had become so difficult. (Photo: Judy Liao)*

children played beside her innocently. She explained that when the wildfire came, she and her family living nearby scrambled to escape and drove away from the scene. The traffic was too slow, and the fire was too fierce. Two of their family's cars were unable to keep up and were engulfed as they fell further and further behind. In her rearview mirror, she saw them disappear into the fire. In those two cars were six of her family members, one of whom was only a three-month-old baby.

Keily and her twelve surviving family members lived temporarily in a trailer in the parking lot of the shelter, thinking about how they would keep on living in the future.

"When I close my eyes, I see the fire coming toward me."

Mrs. Zhang was in tears as she shared her experiences with the volunteers. Mrs. Zhang's daughter had come from Dalian, China to visit and was out buying groceries as the fire approached. When the time came for Mrs. Zhang and her husband to flee, they found that the fire had reached their car. In pitch darkness, someone forcefully pulled them onto their car. It turned out that the police had saved them. When they looked back, their house was already engulfed by the flames.

Skye and her father lived on the beautiful hills of Magalia. When the fire came, her father

woke her up. The fire was very close to her home, and her father urged her to run quickly, deciding to stay in order to protect the house. After the disaster, the house had been reduced to ashes, and her father passed away shortly thereafter. Having lost everything, Skye could only sleep in the car, missing her father and crying constantly. She told the volunteers that she just wanted to go back to simpler days, as everything had become so difficult.

### **Bringing Hope to Paradise**

For more than twenty days, Tzu Chi volunteers had been stationed in the DRC, and even provided care through the Thanksgiving holiday. They listened quietly and attentively to what the survivors had to share, giving them hugs and personally handing out cash cards, warm blankets, and bamboo banks to pass on love. They hoped that when survivors received their warmth and care, they would also attain peace of mind.

By November 26, after seventeen days of firefighting and three days of continuous rain, the Camp Fire was finally fully contained. A total of 153,336 acres were burned down, an area twice the size of Taipei. Around 12,000 households were seriously affected by the fires.

The Woolsey Fire in Ventura County, Southern California, also occurred on the afternoon of November 8, spreading along the coastline quickly to Los Angeles County. The

coastal area was densely filled with smoke until November 21, when the Woolsey Fire was completely extinguished.

Though the ruthless fires burned down the homes of the people of California, they also inspired goodness within the hearts of people across the United States. Tzu Chi volunteers from more than 200 locations in 20 states raised funds on the streets for two consecutive weekends. Many companies and individuals participated in “Giving Tuesday” on November 27, doubling donations to help more people.

On November 29, Tzu Chi USA also started the “Hope Heals” fundraising campaign in hopes of helping as many of the affected families get through the difficulties and rebuild their road back to Paradise.

The latter part of 2018 was filled with disasters. On September 14, Hurricane Florence struck North Carolina. On October 10, Hurricane Michael swept through Florida, and beginning from November 8, California suffered the Camp and Woolsey fires. Tzu Chi USA volunteers from north to south mobilized to help, though there are still not enough people to provide assistance. Master Cheng Yen shared her hope for Tzu Chi



*Tzu Chi volunteers from twenty states and more than 200 locations across the United States raised funds on the streets for two consecutive weekends. (Photo: Rong Chang Ming)*

volunteers: “Bodhi seeds need to be spread even more. With one more volunteer awakening their love, there is that much more sincerity in the world. When the four elements are out of balance, it will cause disaster; the four elements will only be in balance when people’s hearts are balance and we can love and respect one another.” 🌱



Elaine Lui and fellow Stanford Tzu Ching, May Aye, help a Camp Fire survivor register for cash aid. (Photo: Valerie Tseng)

## Finding the Light

by Elaine Lui

*Only by first lighting up our heart can we inspire others to do the same.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

I still remember waking up that early November morning to a concerned text from my friend Kristen, asking if there had been a fire near our university campus and if I was doing alright. I smelled the smoke, but I was okay, I assured her. My close friends all knew I had sensitive lungs. Growing up in Houston, where the pollution from heavy oil and gas emissions often kept me up coughing at night, I felt like California was a godsend. Since I had not seen the news yet, I ignorantly replied that the smoke must have blew in from the Woolsey Fire in the south. Little did I realize that as we spoke, the deadly Camp Fire had

already begun ravaging the city of Paradise. Little did I know my life would soon change forever.

The haze that covered campus in the following weeks was inconceivable. The clear, sunny skies I had taken for granted since moving to Palo Alto for graduate school were replaced by a flaming red sun that pierced through layers of grey smog. The air was shrouded with smoke. It was difficult to see, and I could barely breathe, let alone function. The dense flow of bicyclists laughing and conversing between passing periods, a typical sight on Stanford's sprawling green campus, all but disappeared. I saw students walking to classes



## Young Bodhisattvas

with their eyes grimly set. Their faces were covered by N95 masks distributed by the university health center. When I did run across the occasional biker or two, I saw them riding one-handedly, shirts and jackets pressed against their faces, shielding them against the thick smoke that pressed on all of us in a suffocating chokehold.

In the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving break, I grew increasingly restless. I kept watching the news. My heart sank again and again at the devastating footage. The fires were still not contained, people were suffering, and we felt its effects even two hundred miles away. As fate would have it, I had joined Stanford Tzu Ching, a collegiate chapter of the Tzu Chi Foundation, just months before. At that time, I had emerged from a months-long battle with depression with a new perspective on life. My depression had stemmed from personal losses and a narrow self-absorption, and I was determined to move forward looking beyond myself. I had already immersed myself in volunteering with Tzu Chi when I heard about the Northwest Region's Camp Fire disaster relief efforts and their shortage of volunteers. I knew I had to go.

On the following Saturday morning, the Stanford Tzu Ching officers and I made the drive to the Disaster Relief Center (DRC) in Chico. The sky was pitch black when we departed, and the further north we drove, the harder it became to see the roads and to breathe. The smell of

smoke began seeping into our car until we were all coughing and digging out masks to protect our constricting lungs. Everything was cloaked in a layer of smoke. The trees we drove past were burned to the ground, and the sprawling earth was marred with angry, blackened foliage. "It's so bad," Michael, the president of our Tzu Ching chapter, remarked in dismay as we took in the uniformly charred landscape. "I didn't realize..." Although I had seen the footage of the Paradise fires before, Michael's words echoed through me as I witnessed the devastating aftermath with my own eyes. It was both sobering and heartbreaking.

As we pulled into the parking lot of the DRC, I saw a seemingly endless line of people and families huddling together in the dense smoke and cold, waiting for the doors of the center to open. Inside, volunteers and staff members were all business as they rushed about to set up booths. We were all preparing for a long day of service and relief work. When I reached the Tzu Chi Foundation booth, located in a far corner of the building, I stopped to take in my surroundings. Our volunteers sat behind tables draped in dark blue with the words, "Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation – Gratitude. Respect. Love." clearly displayed to all who passed by. As volunteers of Tzu Chi, an organization whose namesake itself is deeply rooted in "compassion" and "relief," we would be providing not only financial resources but also emotional support to the survivors of the



Stanford Tzu Ching volunteers gather for a photo after a day of volunteering at the Disaster Relief Center. (Photo: Provided by Elaine Lui)

Camp Fire. Through words and gestures, such as holding their hands and embracing them, we sought to show survivors of the fire – who had just lost everything – that we stood in solidarity with them. In a time of fear, pain, and uncertainty, people all over the globe were rooting for them and joining hands to send help their way.

Before I knew it, the doors opened, and our relief work began. My first client was an elderly man named Jim, who told me his life story as I typed his information into our registration system. A native to Paradise, Jim grew up in the same neighborhood his entire life and deeply cared for his neighbors. He saw them as his friends and family. At one point, he paused and asked me, “Have you ever seen a wildfire in person?” When I replied that I had not, he fell silent for a few minutes, before whispering, “The fire moved so fast, it was unbelievable.” He then said something I will never forget. “You know,” he began shakily. “I’ve been having trouble sleeping. I couldn’t sleep last night, because I felt so guilty. Because I didn’t

try to save my neighbors. I...I didn’t even try.” He stumbled on the last few words, burying his face in his hands to hide his pain. My heart broke. I could not fathom his sacrifices and losses. He had scrambled to get his disabled wife out of her wheelchair and into their car. He did not know if they

were going to make it out alive. He had driven through flames, the heat of the fire palpable as the paint melted off their car and scorched the doors. He had escaped and survived, but his neighbors had not.

I could not imagine facing such a decision – who and what to sacrifice – and being forced to live with that choice forever. I did not know how to comfort Jim, because it felt like anything I could possibly say to try and ease his pain would come across as insensitive. The only words I could make out, that I said again and again, were, “You tried your best. It’s not your fault. You tried your best, and that is enough.” In the end, I could not help Jim see the light in his situation, but I would like to believe that by listening to his story and offering him a new perspective, I helped lessen some of his pain. Maybe that was not enough, but I could see a small spark of life in his eyes, when he realized he had saved lives that night. He had saved his own



*Elaine Lui smiling amidst  
volunteer work at the Jing Si Abode.  
(Photo: Provided by Elaine Lui)*

life. He had saved his family. And that was enough for me, knowing I had done my best.

After sending Jim on his way, the rest of the day passed in a blur. I became more efficient with data entry, but the more clients I interacted with, the more my energy waned, and the more hopeless I felt. Was what we were doing enough? I knew relief work would be tiring, but I did not realize how emotionally spent I had become until Julia, another survivor, sat down in front of my table. As part of documentation, I asked Julia where she currently lived and the extent to which her home was damaged by the fire. Her story mirrored those of so many. Like many of the other survivors of the Camp Fire, Julia had lost everything. The home she had lived in her whole life burned to the ground, taking with it all of her sentimental possessions and multigenerational belongings. Yet from there, the similarities seemed to lessen. Her friends and loved ones were okay, she said. She had been able to reach all of them. They all had a warm place to stay because of relatives and friends in the area. Everything was going to be okay. She had insurance. All those material things she had lost could be replaced in time. "Well, maybe not everything," she mused, since some of it was handmade, or passed down from her grandmother. "But it's just stuff," she said. "It's just stuff." That was a phrase she would



repeat over and over again, with a matter-of-fact sincerity that startled me.

As Julia continued to speak, it struck me that something about her, the way she seemed to acknowledge her terrible losses without losing sight of the positive aspects of her situation, was different from anyone else I had met that day. It was not just the optimism. I was perplexed. It was not until I heard her say, in relief, "I'm so lucky, really...I'm one of the lucky ones," that I was able to identify what made this woman so remarkably resilient. Despite losing all her possessions, Julia focused on the health and well-being of her loved ones, who had all survived the fire. She was touched by the generosity of her friend, who offered her a place to stay until she was back on her feet. Julia was grateful. And with that gratitude, she felt a sense of peace that allowed her to see the light. I was deeply humbled. Two words every Tzu Chi member takes to heart are "gan en," which together means "with gratitude." It is what we say at the end of every interaction with strangers and loved ones. It is with gratitude that we give our care and share our compassion with our communities. With a grateful heart, we can always find peace within ourselves. And Julia was living proof that in the same circumstances, by shifting our mindset, we have the power to reframe our experiences and overcome them.

When people ask me why I decided to join Tzu Ching at the time I did, I usually tell them that I think it was fate. A yin-yuan, a root cause, that reinforced something I have always believed in: that everything happens for a reason. The year 2018 was a tumultuous one for me. I had always prioritized academics, yet when I was finally at the institution of my dreams, with all the resources and opportunities I could wish for, I felt deeply saddened and dissatisfied. The painful loss of three of the closest people in my life over the course of a year, along with crippling uncertainty in my career, broke my spirit. Life seemed too fragile, too short. A battle with major depression rendered me a debilitated and unrecognizable shell of myself. I was lost at its wake. I questioned core parts of my identity. I reevaluated my priorities. And as I sought help and slowly walked out of the depths I was in, I reflected deeply on everything I once held with such conviction.

After months of self-reflection, I realized that I was not just grieving for the people I had lost. The raw pain of loss had ebbed with time and counseling, but the guilt remained. I had allowed myself to become absorbed in the daily cycle of me, I, and myself. Graduate school, particularly the doctoral program, is inherently an isolating process, and I had lost sight of the importance of building meaningful relationships. I forgot the beauty of the moment. I was not living mindfully, and I was so narrowly focused on all the obstacles

seemingly spanning my entire world that I lost sight of the people who mattered, until it was too late. I forgot to look beyond myself, to take time nurturing my relationships, and in doing so, I lost a vital part of myself – the part that has always cared deeply and sought more meaning to life.

I found myself again through participating in community outreach with Stanford Tzu Ching and seeing the value of deeply-rooted human compassion and the capacity of a single person to guide others to the light. From the outside looking in, volunteers are the ones giving time and energy to help others. But in my personal experiences, when I give freely, I am never just giving. No, I receive in abundance lessons in humility, compassion, and resilience. And as I learn them, they ultimately teach me ways to heal my own scars.

When I volunteered at the DRC, the pain I experienced from battling depression graced me with a deeper level of understanding. I was able to reach out to those who suffered with open arms. I was sensitive and aware in a way I would not have been, had I not experienced my own share of losses, and for



this, I am grateful. In giving freely, I believe I received the greatest gift of all: I learned to turn my own face toward the light, to heal my scars through compassionate love, and to accept, with graciousness, all the difficult experiences that have shaped me into who I am today. The world may be full of pain and darkness, but it is also full of light and kindness. We can always choose what we focus on. We have the power to reframe our experiences, to fill our hearts with gratitude, and

to not allow the negative ones to embitter and harden us. We can choose to see the light in the world and ourselves, in all its beautiful possibilities – and we can inspire others to do the same. 🌿

*Elaine Lui is a Tzu Ching officer at Stanford University, where she is currently a graduate student studying tissue engineering for medical applications. She grew up in Houston, Texas and loves the Bay Area weather and culture.*



*Members of Tzu Chi Collegiate Association pose for a group photo with the Dharma Masters at the International TCCA Leadership Camp. (Photo: Provided by Elaine Lui)*



# In It for the Long-Term

By the Editorial Team | | Photos: Provided by Tzu Chi USA

*If we have the will to do something, we need not fear, for with conviction, time can be found, and strength will surely come.”*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

*Minjbing Hsieh has served as the Executive Director of Northwest Region since 2006. Introduced to Tzu Chi through his parents when he was in high school, Minjbing has a special connection with Tzu Chi. In his over thirty years living and serving in Silicon Valley, he has led many of Tzu Chi's disaster relief efforts. However, it has only been within the past three years that such extreme, large-scale disasters have been taking place. When California's Camp Fire struck on November 8, Minjbing faced his biggest challenge yet.*

In the weeks leading up to November, Minjbing and the Tzu Chi volunteers of Northwest Region were focused on preparing for the Annual Fundraising Concert, a charity concert scheduled on November 9 and 10, 2018. Coincidentally, the purpose of the concert was to raise funds for disaster relief. Tzu Chi volunteers in Northern California had recently engaged in disaster relief for the Carr Fire, which had struck the town of

Redding in late July, and for the Santa Rosa Fire, which had struck in October 2017.

But on November 8, the Camp Fire would be at the center of everyone's attention.

When Minjbing first heard about the fire in the early morning of November 8, it was small and did not seem particularly notable, yet a few hours later, the news would break out that the fire was indeed very serious and extremely deadly.



Minjhing recalled the news coverage, “It was surprisingly quick and

was spreading very, very fast.” Within just few hours, Minjhing and his team already knew that this fire would be huge. Though they had initially hoped that the fire was remote and far enough from them that they wouldn’t need to take any action, by the evening of November 8, the situation was completely different.

By the morning of November 9, almost the entire city of Paradise was gone. The fire had completely destroyed it in just one night. As Tzu Chi volunteers held a conference call with emergency response teams, they were determined to respond. By the end of the meeting, they had decided to join the relief effort.

The first efforts to deliver supplies were carried out on November 9. Though the upcoming fundraising concert, a huge event, was still pending,

volunteers reallocated their efforts to immediately travel to the disaster area, bringing relief supplies with them. Soon, over 500 blankets were loaded onto two trucks. Over the next few days, the Camp Fire would be classified as a federal disaster. When FEMA opened the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in Chico on November 16, Tzu Chi volunteers were waiting outside. The volunteers immediately went in to set up their booths.

Minjhing recalled the intensity of the following days, which were spent serving the survivors. “The only way to do things right, to do things effectively, was to use online registration.”

Unlike the prior disaster relief efforts undertaken by Tzu Chi, in which the lists of affectees were provided by organizations such as the Red Cross, this time, Tzu Chi volunteers conducted the intake process themselves. They spoke to affectees one at a time to develop their own name list, using their own system to verify the reported damages from the disaster assessments. The online system set up by Tzu Chi and the work of volunteers at the DRC culminated in a list with the names of over 10,000 families. One week later, on November 22, Master Cheng Yen urged Tzu Chi volunteers to distribute the cash cards for relief as quickly as possible.

At times, the speed in which things took place seemed overwhelming to Tzu Chi volunteers. It required a lot of preparation work to set up the cash systems and talk with survivors. Yet, by

Thanksgiving Day, the Tzu Chi volunteers were able to prepare for and hold their first distribution. Han Huang, the CEO of Tzu Chi USA, and other volunteers flew from Southern California to participate in that first distribution.



## Comforting Survivors

Minjhing explained, “We adopted a very human, personal, embracing way to work with every client, one by one.”

The Tzu Chi volunteers strived to offer a kind, professional service in working with every person who came to them. Considering the recipients as “clients,” Tzu Chi volunteers set up an appointment for every person who registered for aid. If recipients missed appointments, volunteers would reschedule with recipients, and would still

ensure that recipients would be able to receive financial aid and tell their stories.

As Minjhing recalls, Tzu Chi volunteers spent eighty percent of their time listening to recipients sharing their stories. Although the recipients initially appeared nervous or unsettled, the volunteers’ loving gestures, and the unexpected monetary aid they distributed, set the recipients’ minds at ease. These experiences touched not only the recipients, but the volunteers as well. Hearing so many stories and providing comfort to recipients, it was as if the volunteers and recipients were establishing good friendships.

Working from Thanksgiving Day, Tzu Chi volunteers comforted survivors and distributed aid. By December 22, after a month of service in the DRC, the “Emergency Relief Phase” ended. Throughout the month, Tzu Chi volunteers served in the DRC every day, driving from the San Jose office, a three-and-a-half-hour drive, one-way. As Minjhing stated, “The continuity, the consistency, [of service] are the key elements.” Minjhing ensured that Tzu Chi was a constant presence, and that the organization would not leave anyone behind.

As Tzu Chi volunteers moved into the long-term recovery phase of their efforts, volunteers continued to travel to the disaster recovery site and visit survivors every week. Almost every person they met expressed that they wished Tzu Chi could stay there. In one instance that shocked Tzu Chi volunteers, a man suddenly approached them

outside of the building. Though Minjhing was a bit nervous about a confrontation, the man suddenly put his palms together and bowed deeply, saying, “Thank you...thank you.” Minjhing explained, “It was not only the words he said, but also the way he presented his respect and his gratitude to us. He knows how we express that.” This instance of sincerity made a deep impression on Minjhing and stood out in his memory.

## Lessons On Leadership

All of the efforts undertaken by Tzu Chi volunteers in response to the Camp Fire required a strong and dedicated team. As the Executive Director of Northwest Region, Minjhing has gained a lot of experience over time. In faith-based organizations like Tzu Chi, there is no way to lead by authority. As Minjhing says, “There is no position of power, there is only personal influence.”

Minjhing takes inspiration from Master Cheng Yen’s own style of leading by example, and refers back to her teachings as a source to guide him in leading others. The insights from Master Cheng Yen’s teachings have served Minjhing in especially difficult situations, such as disaster relief. One such teaching that Minjhing reflects on even now is a teaching Master Cheng Yen gave on compassion and wisdom, the two essential qualities for Tzu Chi volunteers to cultivate as part of their spiritual practice. As Minjhing explained, “When we cannot have both, when these two are



in conflict, then go for compassion. Don’t worry about giving money to the wrong people. If they need it, they need it. Don’t be bogged down by the very small percentage of people who engage in fraud. Don’t let the fraud become a barrier to practice or to give to the many, many more people who need our help.”

With wisdom from Master Cheng Yen, Minjhing plans to continue moving forward in supporting those affected by the Camp Fire. The fire has only caused physical damage to buildings and infrastructure, the psychological and financial effects will be felt for a long time. Even now, near the middle of 2019, many people are still living out of their cars after having lost their homes in the fire.

Despite the enormity of the work that needs to be done, Minjhing remains optimistic. The processes Tzu Chi followed in its disaster relief efforts have been tested and are a lot smoother. With time and experience, Tzu Chi Northwest Region’s team has gained both knowledge and wisdom, and the volunteers are striving to take further steps to help those affected. In the past, Tzu Chi USA has mostly focused on immediate disaster relief through material aid and cash-card

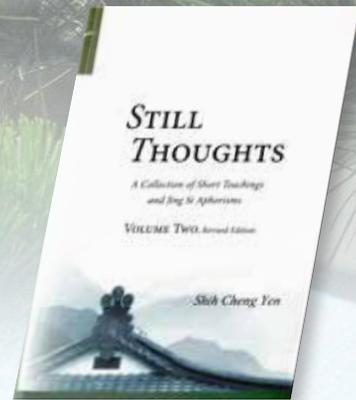
distributions. But Minjhing now wants to focus on spearheading the push into a new frontier of disaster relief by focusing on long-term disaster recovery efforts. Tzu Chi volunteers have been working with different agencies and have joined recovery committee meetings every week to see what kind of services are still needed, and determine what Tzu Chi can provide. Minjhing puts his faith in case-management as a way Tzu Chi can help people to get back on their feet. Although the resources and manpower of Tzu Chi are limited, Minjhing wants to stay engaged in helping people recover, even if that means focusing on one person at a time. This emphasis on sustaining operations by being consistently present every step of the way has resulted in new

volunteers joining Tzu Chi and being trained to serve in their local communities. Minjhing hopes to work together with people with diverse skills, backgrounds, and talents – from business people, to social workers, to acupuncturists, to the disaster survivors themselves – to deliver more services to the people who need them. On March 9, Tzu Chi held its first English new volunteer orientation of 2019 in Chico. Ultimately, Minjhing wants to grow Tzu Chi's roots in the places of need. It starts with building a local team, perhaps even establishing an office in Chico one day. As Minjhing says, it is important to be there. "One by one, we can gradually help to rebuild the community." 🌱



# Dharma Q & A

Dharma Master Cheng Yen responds to questions from visitors, volunteers, staff, and disciples



## The Source of Troubles

Q: “In society today there are so many problems. What is the origin of all these troubles?”

A: “The origin of these problems lies in ‘people.’ Society is made up of individuals, so for a society and a country to flourish, every member is responsible for making it happen. Take the problem with trash as an example. The source of the problem is not the mountains of garbage in our landfills, but that every family is generating too much trash.”

## The Proper Approach to Life

Q: What is the proper approach to life?

A: “You must take responsibility for every word you say and make sure that everything you are doing is part of a larger plan. Then things that come up in the near future will not deter you from pursuing your life’s goals. Plan for the future, yet be responsible in the way you are living right now.”

## Having Faith for the Future

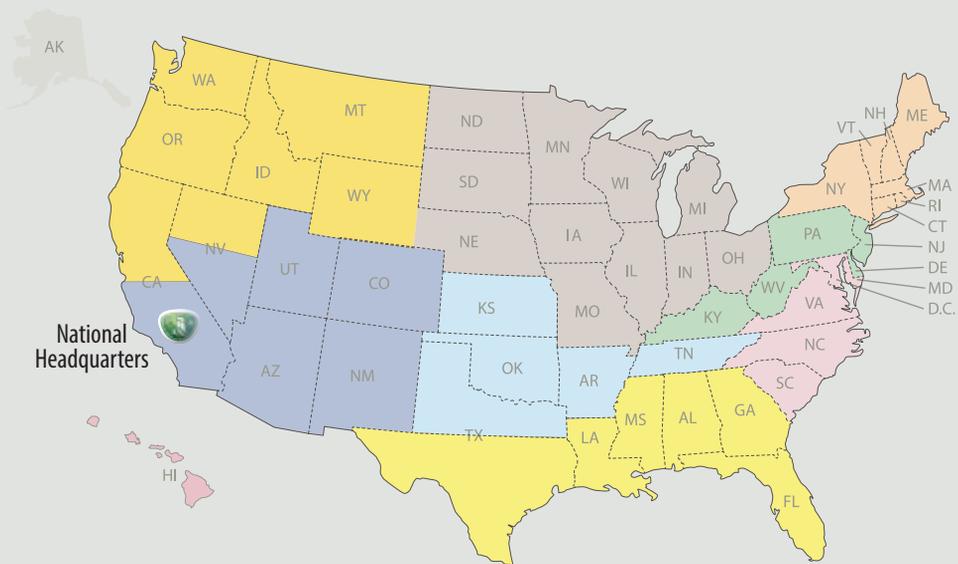
Q: “Master, do you have faith in the future of the world?”

A: “We must always have faith. If we give up whenever we see imperfections here and there, those problems will just keep growing. We must look beyond what is immediately around us to see the big picture.”

*Excerpts from Still Thoughts Volume 2 compiled by Jing Si Editorial Group (Jing Si Publications, 2016). For more information, please visit Jing Si Books & Cafe (directory on pg 62-64) or [jingsi.shop](http://jingsi.shop).*



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# TZU CHI

## A BRIEF HISTORY...

In 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merit Association in Hualien with the support of thirty housewives who each put aside 50 Taiwanese cents (around 2 US cents) of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. In the first year, they helped a total of thirty-one elderly, ill, and poor people from fifteen families. As word spread, more people participated, and the initiative gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien: first across the island of Taiwan and then around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and supporters in over fifty countries worldwide. Over the past fifty years, Tzu Chi's four missions—Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture—have grown from the seeds of gratitude, respect, and love. With time, Tzu Chi's activities have expanded to include international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental protection.

In the United States, Tzu Chi operates nine regional service areas with more than eighty offices and facilities nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through activities such as emergency disaster relief, homeless services, school support programs, college scholarships, income tax reporting assistance, holiday care packs, free and low-cost medical clinics and outreaches, cancer support groups, community education classes, and the production of positive, inspiring media.

Whenever disaster strikes at home or abroad, Tzu Chi volunteers deliver cash aid, hot meals, and emergency relief supplies directly into the hands of disaster survivors. Over the years, US Tzu Chi volunteers have actively provided relief after major disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and tornadoes. Internationally, volunteers have provided relief in earthquakes and other disasters in Haiti, Japan, Nepal, Ecuador, Mexico, and many other countries.

In recent years, Tzu Chi's charitable work has been increasingly recognized by the global community. In 2010, Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and in 2013, Tzu Chi was honored as a White House Champion of Change. Dharma Master Cheng Yen has been presented with the Roosevelt Institute's FDR Distinguished Public Service Award (2011), named to the TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people (2011), and honored with the Rotary International Award of Honor (2014).





**Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation**

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*Tzu Chi volunteers join residents affected by the Camp Fire in a prayer service held one month after the disaster. (Photo: Chen Zhengdao)*



*Only when love and kindness  
fill our hearts will the world be  
free of disasters.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

